CAPTAIN OLIVER HOLMES WOODWARD
1st Tunnelling Company

WOODWARD, OLIVER HOLMES (1885-1966), mining engineer, metallurgist and soldier, was born on 8 October 1885 at Tenterfield, New South Wales, son of native-born parents Sydney Arthur Woodward, storekeeper, and his wife Jemima Johnstone, nee Reid. He was educated at public schools and for two years at Newington College, Sydney. Early practical mining experience at Irvinebank, North Queensland, was followed by three years at Charters Towers where he worked underground and studied part time at the School of Mines. In 1909 he was awarded the W. H. Browne medal for mining and in 1910 the medal for metallurgy. Further experience underground qualified him as a mine-manager. As such he went in 1913 to Mount Morgan and then to Papua where he assisted the geologist (Sir) Colin Fraser at the Laloki and other mines. Late in 1914 Woodward returned to Mount Morgan to recover from malaria.

In August 1915 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force; he was commissioned and posted to No.1 Company of the newly raised Mining Battalion. He sailed for France in March 1916. On its arrival in Flanders the battalion was broken up and the 1st Tunnelling Company became an independent engineer unit. Deployed in the Armentieres sector, France, the company fought on the surface as well as underground and in June 1916 Woodward won the Military Cross for blowing up a snipers' post in no man's land.

Early in 1917 the company took over mining operations in a section south-east of Ypres, Belgium, which included deep galleries under the German lines; these led to two mines, one charged with 53,000lb. (24,041kg) of explosives and the other with 70,000lb. (31,752kg). For months the company protected these mines, using listening posts and counter-mines, until the opening of the battle of Messines when they were fired with devastating effect. Woodward, by this time a captain, headed the team in charge and personally fired the mines.

From August 1918 the tunnelling companies were employed on the surface as field engineers. On 29 September at Bony, east of Amiens, France, Woodward was in charge of three sections of the 1st Tunnelling Company which were employed on road maintenance and came under enemy fire; he once more distinguished himself by his courage and resourcefulness, and was awarded a Bar to his Military Cross. In the last weeks of the war his section was attached to the 1st British Division for its advance to the Rhine. For the crossing of the

Sambre-Oise Canal east of Le Cateau, his men - under heavy fire - built a tank bridge spanning the walls of a lock; Woodward received a second Bar to his Military Cross, an extremely rare distinction.

Returning to Australia in May 1919, he went to the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Co. before taking up an appointment at Port Pine, South Australia, as a general metallurgist with Broken Hill Associated Smelters, of which Fraser was joint managing director. On 3 September 1920 Woodward married Marjorie Moffat Waddell at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane. Soon afterwards he became plant superintendent at Port Pirie. In 1926 he was promoted to general superintendent. Over the nine years he held this position there was extensive rebuilding to accommodate metallurgical developments such as the continuous process for refining lead bullion. There was also a steady improvement in living and working conditions for employees.

With the support of Fraser and W. S. Robinson, in November 1934 Woodward became general manager of North Broken Hill Ltd. His thirteen years at Broken Hill witnessed an active rebuilding and a modernizing of surface plant: the British Broken Hill mine, idle since 1930, was re-opened; a new mill using gravity concentration followed by flotation was built and commissioned; ore haulage and hoisting practices were improved.

In 1940 Woodward became president of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. He joined the
board of directors of North Broken Hill Ltd in December 1944 and remained on the board after retiring from general managership at the North Mine on 8 October 1947. He had also been a director of Broken Hill Associated Smelters and the associated Electrolytic Refining & Smelting Co. President of the Australian Mining and Metals Association (1952-54), he was appointed C.M.G. in 1956.

Woodward had written an autobiography and accounts of his wartime experiences and of the Broken Hill mining industry. From his small country property near Adelaide, in 1952 he moved to Hobart. Survived by his wife, a daughter and two sons, he died there on 24 August 1966 and was cremated.

Woodward, Oliver Holmes (1885-1966) Biographical Entry - Australian Dictionary of Biographies http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au